

Answers to Questions received by EPA regarding 2006 AWPPG RFP

This is the final update.

Questions were due Friday, August 4. Proposals are due Tuesday, August 15.

Question: When will awardees be notified and when the will be available?

Answer: Notifications to potential grantees will take place in September, 2006. Potential grantees have 30 days to submit all documentation for the applications, and the awards will take place later in the fall, 2006.

Question: If applicants provide matching funds will these applications be more competitive?

Answer: All eligible proposals, based on the Section III threshold eligibility review, will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria and weights (100 total point scale). Points will be awarded based on how well and thoroughly each criterion and/or sub-criterion is addressed in the proposal package. Project Leveraging is worth 10 points (evaluation criterion 4).

Question: How many awards were made in 2005?

Answer: Eleven applications funded, 129 applications received.

Question: Typically how many applications are awarded funding?

Answer: EPA intends to fund a total of 13 – 26 applications in 2006. There are three major priority areas, and EPA intends to fund 3 – 7 applications from the Watershed/TMDL Program, 6 – 14 applications from the Nonpoint Source Program, and 4 – 5 applications from the Monitoring Program.

Question: How do individuals or AORs apply?

Answer: To become fully eligible, individuals and AORs must submit a one-time registration process at <http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted>.

Question: Is a list of the awards made under this program available?

Answer: Please go to <http://www.epa.gov/ogd/>, and click on *Grants Awards Database*.

Question: Are Universities eligible?

Answer: Yes. **[Clarification: Except for educational institutions that are for-profit/proprietary organizations.]**

Question: Is it best to combine two projects into one proposal under one project topic area, or send in two separate proposals under two separate project topic areas?

Answer: Proposals to fund projects under this announcement must address one of the specific project topic areas listed under one of the three national priorities identified: Watershed/TMDL Program; Nonpoint Source Program; and Monitoring and Assessment Program. While applicants can submit different proposals for different project topic areas, each proposal can only address one project topic area.

Question: How should the cover letter be formatted?

Answer: Please see Section IV of the RFP.

Question: Does EPA have QAPP Guidelines?

Answer: Please see <http://www.epa.gov/ORD/NRMRL/qa/>

Question: Has any organization been invited by the EPA to apply for this grant?

Answer: This is an open competition. All eligible applicants may submit applications.

Question: Do indirect costs have to be based on a negotiated indirect cost rate? If not, is there a specified rate that should be used?

Answer: Yes, this information can be found on: <http://www.grants.gov>

Question: Are the project proposals for each category reviewed by independent reviewers?

Answer: Yes, they are reviewed by a panel.

Question: Are there specific format requirements – i.e. font size, line spacing (single or double), margin size, etc.?

Answer: The required format is: The Statement of Work section must be limited to no more than nine (9) typewritten pages (a page is one side of a piece of paper). Additional pages will not be considered. Supporting materials (such as annotated resumes, SF 424 and SF 424A, and support letters) are not included in the nine (9) page limit. Pages should be numbered for ease of reading. All proposal packages, regardless of how submitted, must include the following documents:

- 1) Complete Statement of Work as described below.
- 2) Signed SF 424 and SF 424A.

Question: Would a county soil and water conservation district be able to use AWPPG funds to hire a consultant to help develop a water quality trading agreement?

Answer: Your entity would be eligible for a grant under this RFP, and consultants are allowed to assist the grantee - please see Section VI. F. p. 24 for contractual restrictions.

Question: We are considering submittal of a proposal in response to the AWPPG RFP, under Section 3 - Monitoring and Assessment Program National Priority, part A. - Application of Probability Survey Data. The RFP is unclear to us regarding the anticipated amount and number of awards. Do you anticipate four awards of 100k, or four awards totaling 100k under this section?

Answer: As explained in the RFP (Section I.B.3) there is an estimated \$150,000 - \$200,000 available under this Program Priority and that we anticipate awarding approximately 4 – 5 projects. Under this scenario, each project might average about \$40,000, depending on the exact scope and nature of the project.

Question: It is clear that the Statement of Work should be no more than 9 pages for this grant. Is this single-spaced or double-spaced pages?

Answer(s): Yes, the Statement of Work should be no more than 9 pages - single or double space is permitted, but still restricted to a total of 9 pages.

Question: Are there any funds for watershed evaluation available?

Answer: Please refer to the RFP (Section I.B) for the project descriptions EPA is interested in. EPA is limited to these project descriptions.

Question: Can two organizations collaborate and partner on this AWPPG, with a state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) writing and being the applicant of the grant and initial recipient of the funds, but with a state University being the end-recipient of the funding? The University will house staff for a volunteer water quality monitoring program (whose salary is part of this grant proposal budget). The DEP would be listed as the applicant, but it would be noted in the grant that the state University is a very active partner in the grant.

Answer: Please see Section VI.F. of the RFP for this answer. We would recommend that the end recipient of the funding submit the proposal.

Question: Item “V.; F. - Funding Restrictions” states that EPA recommends that grant recipients use no more than 50 percent of the grant funds to contract with other entities. Would the grant applicant be able to give the majority of its grant funds to a significant partner (e.g., a state University) without this being viewed as contracting out for more than 50 % of the grant funds?

Answer: See answer above.

Question: On page 3 regarding the Assessment and TMDL workshop, the following two paragraphs appear to be inconsistent:

“The workshops should be located in or near major U.S. cities accessible to transportation. EPA anticipates funding one cooperative agreement with a one-year project period for a recipient to conduct one to two workshops under this topic area.”

“EPA anticipates funding one to two cooperative agreements (each with a planned one-year project period) under this specific project topic area for a total available of approximately \$80,000, depending on the amount requested and the overall size and scope of the project(s).”

Does this funding represents the amount potentially available for one cooperative agreement (as in the first paragraph), or for one to two agreements (as in the second paragraph)?

Answer: Sorry for the confusion, we intended the answer to be the latter of the two funding scenarios.

Question: Is the cover page included in the 9 page limit for the Statement of Work?

Answer: Yes, the cover page is included in the 9 page limit.

Question: The RFP states that the funding is available for 3 years. However, some of the topics limit the length of funding to one year. Does the one year of funding have to be in the first year or can it occur in any of the three years?

Answer: The majority of the projects included in the RFP anticipate a one year project and budget period. EPA can approve a project period for up to 3 years, however, the project must be fully funded in the first year, if the project totals less than \$75,000.

Questions: I have questions about two potential proposals for the AWPPG:

GROUP ONE: One group (applying for 1c) has a watershed project already in the works, with municipal and industry partners, and they will be following through on this project for the next few years. They hope to learn new ways of checking and maintaining water quality by integrating wetlands. During and after the project, they will be disseminating project results and information with the community, local governments, and also at national conferences.

Their concern is page two of the proposal: Will this grant cover parts of a project as long as that project will also transfer information and/or advance the state of knowledge of water supply? In other words, can they ask for grant money for a project task, such as comparing water samples (for example), which will further the project and their knowledge?

Answer: I would recommend reviewing Section III.C. (Threshold Eligibility Criteria) of the RFP. *“All projects must contribute to the overall development and improvement of watershed programs. Funds may not be used solely for the operational support of specific watershed projects, for the development of TMDLs for specific waterbodies, or for in-depth monitoring for individual waterbodies. Note: For project topic area I.B.1.b. "Impaired Waters Recovery and Results Analysis," EPA will not consider proposals for results analysis project focused on a single impaired water's recovery.”* In addition, Section I.B.1.c. outlines that one of the primary purposes of the Project Topic is “assisting...practitioners in the development and implementation of effective watershed plans that strategically address priority water resource goals.” This Section continues to emphasize the need to provide training, demonstrations and dissemination of information to watershed practitioners. (Please see Section III.C.2. for the Agency’s definition of “demonstration” projects.

GROUP TWO: This group would like to apply for 2c. The group has serious watershed issues, and an interstate lawsuit is pending. The concern is that the community is in part ignorant about the significance of the local water problems, and they feel it is necessary to educate school children and the community on watershed issues.

They would like to use the grant money to buy watershed materials for the local schools and libraries, which in turn will educate the public. There is concern that they should also use the money in another manner, such as for watershed signs. Just checking to see if both the school project idea and the signs are within the EPA guidelines.

Answer: Again, we can only suggest a project of this nature must meet the “Eligibility Criteria” as defined in Section III.C. of the RFP, and whether the project fits within the Project Topic Area as outlined. Specifically, the type of materials described above could be supported using these funds if they were an integral part of an approvable Scope of Work.

Question: These questions specifically relate to your request for proposals for a Newsletter for Volunteer Monitoring, Section 3.b general: Is the \$100k cap per year or for the 3 year period? Specifically: Will the new pub be replacing the current "Volunteer Monitor"? Why? What were acknowledged or perceived weaknesses with the current Monitor? Your request to cover both state and volunteer groups with one newsletter seems to be overly ambitious - can two separate publications be proposed that target these groups separately?

Answer: EPA wants to continue to support a single publication that provides information on volunteer monitoring to a broad range of interested persons. EPA is looking for proposals in the range of \$50-\$100,000, covering up to a three year project period.

Question: We request clarification regarding the award amounts that EPA anticipates for each of the priority topic areas (and sub-sections) discussed in the RFP.

Answer: Please refer to the funding estimates for each of the projects listed under Section I.B. of the RFP. Each description includes an estimate of total funding available for each project area and the estimated number of total awards. For example, under the Watershed/TMDL Program National Priority, the Agency estimates a total of approximately \$350,000 will be available for between 3 – 7 projects, depending on the size, scope and quality of the proposals received.

Question: Concerning funding available for: 3) Monitoring and Assessment Program National Priority a) Application of Probability Survey Data. The proposal states that “approximately \$150,000-\$200,000 is available to fund an estimated four to five projects under this national priority.” Will that amount be divided among the Monitoring and Assessment Program projects, or is that the potential amount available for each project?

Answer: Please see response above for the answer to this question.

Question: Do indirect costs have to be based on a negotiated indirect cost rate?

Answer: Yes, indirect costs do need to be based on a negotiated indirect cost rate. Please contact Ms. Kysha Holiday of the Grants Administration Division within EPA for assistance on this issue. Her phone number is: (202) 564-1639.

Question(s) (1) How do we identify the need for a time frame longer than one year and would that count against the project? A demonstration project may require one year to design and a second year during which results could be disseminated. (2) If the dissemination of results will continue into the future resulting in environmental outcomes should those future outcomes be identified in the statement of work?

Answer(s): (1) Please refer to Section II, Award Information. Since EPA reserves the right to partially fund proposals in phases, a demonstration project requiring more than one year may be selected for an award. (2) Yes, future outcomes should be identified in the Statement of Work.

Question: How should the cover letter be formatted? The answer was "Please see Section IV of the RFP" I have read Section IV of the RFP again and did not see any reference to cover letters. Please clarify.

Answer: The RFP refers to a “cover page” requirement. No specific format is specified for the cover page. The contents of the cover page are listed under Section IV.2.C.1.

Question: Can 319 grant funds be counted towards match?" there was no answer. Since the RFP gives information for what can be counted as match?

Answer: No, Section 319 funds can not be used as match for these projects. It is very unusual for the federal government to allow federal dollars to be used as a match.

Question: Can work in non-TMDL watersheds qualify under Priority 1: Watershed/TMDL Program National Priority?

Answer: Yes, other waterbody impairments types are eligible. While the major focus of impaired waters included on the Section 303(d) list focuses on water quality restoration by developing and implementing TMDLs, there are alternative restoration options for non-303(d) waters. For example, waters impaired by pollution (habitat, flow, fish migration, etc.) can be restored (by way of demonstration projects) without the development of TMDLs. Likewise, waters in category 4(b) can be restored by developing a strategy for use of other "required controls required."

Question: Is the purchase of equipment for demonstration and training an acceptable cost item?

Answer: Yes, these purchases would be allowed if they are an integral component of the project. (See Section VI.F of the RFP for more details. Also, please see the SF 424A form details on the project budget break-outs.)

Question: I'm considering rounding up some wastewater and drinking water partners for research that would tie together three themes: TMDL compliance; "asset management" for wastewater and clean water; and broader conservation goals. Specifically, I'd like to bring the idea of quantification of natural capital (i.e.) in terms of its infrastructure benefits to the asset management arena. This overlaps with the "green infrastructure" work going on as well. Deliverables would certainly consist of written analysis, but could also include workshops, web-based tools and additional datasets for on-going statistical analysis.

So, the general question: (1) Is this sort of approach (looking at environmental "assets", with research based around infrastructure providers with water permits) generally appealing under the watershed approach? (2) Is there a particular area where this would be most suitable?

Answer: Given the competitive nature of the RFP, EPA can only respond to specific questions regarding the RFP threshold eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the proposal, and requests for clarification about the announcement. Your question unfortunately falls into an area where we are not permitted to give this type of advice or counsel. We would only recommend that you make your decision on whether a project fits within the National Project Priorities listed in the RFP and within a specific sub-project topic area.

Question(s): I intend to submit an AWPPG grant due August 15th. In conjunction with this grant application, I also intend to apply for a State Monitoring Grant to cover costs of monitoring kits which will be referenced in the AWPPG grant I will be submitting to EPA shortly.

(1) Should this additional funding (since we do not have it yet) be referenced in the 3(e)iv section which asks for opportunities for leveraging other funds or should I simply not reference it? (2) As part of the program, we are proposing to incorporate a water quality monitoring course (scheduled to be taught in 2007) at a local community college. We intend to certify all participating County teachers in monitoring. In conjunction with their certification, we would like to offer continuing education credits for these teachers as an incentive. Should these "credits" be listed in the grant application as "deliverables" or as "outcomes" or should we not reference them? (3) In the leveraging section, can we use state time as match?

Answer(s): (1) It would be fine to reference this other project. We suggest you reference this aspect of the project in the Scope of Work. (2) Yes, the "credits" could be listed as a short-term outcome and (3) Yes, the use of State time/salary would be acceptable as a match.

Question: What is the anticipated start date for projects that are awarded?

Answer: We anticipate that projects will be awarded in the October/November timeframe. Actual start dates for the projects will be negotiated individually during the application phase.

Question(s): (1) We are anticipating submitting an application for the AWPPGs Watershed/TMDL program National Priority-Tools, Incentives and Products Training for the Watershed Approach. Under the announcement it states that the "EPA is also soliciting proposals for training, demonstrations, awards programs/other incentives and dissemination of existing tools..."

What kind of incentives? I am having a difficulty understanding some of the grant objectives. (2) Also, does the organization have to have TMDLs in place for this grant or can a watershed project be included under the Watershed/TMDL Program National Priority?

Answer(s): (1) For a more complete description of the eligibilities under this program, please refer to Section I.A of the RFP: The statutory authority for AWPPGs is Section 104(b)(3) of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Section 104(b)(3) of the CWA restricts the use of these assistance agreements to the following: conducting or promoting the coordination and acceleration of research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys, and studies relating to the causes, effects (including health and welfare effects), extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of water pollution. Demonstrations must involve new or experimental technologies, methods, or approaches, and it is encouraged that the results of the project will be disseminated so that others can benefit from the knowledge gained in the demonstration project. A project that is accomplished through the performance of routine, traditional, or established practices, or a project that is simply intended to carry out a task rather than transfer information or advance the state of knowledge, however worthwhile the project might be, is not

considered a demonstration project. Implementation projects are not eligible for funding under this announcement. (2) Other waterbody impairments types are eligible. While the major focus of impaired waters included on the Section 303(d) list focuses on water quality restoration by developing and implementing TMDLs, there are alternative restoration options for non-303(d) waters. For example, waters impaired by pollution (habitat, flow, fish migration, etc.) can be restored (by way of demonstration projects) without the development of TMDLs. Likewise, waters in category 4(b) can be restored by developing a strategy for use of other “required controls required.”

Question: What is your program's definition of an annotated resume?

Answer: We would suggest that an annotated resume be just a brief version of a “full” resume, yet with some narrative explanation that further explains the relevance of the work experience/skill set. The RFP requests a "Brief description of staffing and funding resources available to implement the proposed project including the number of workers and staff qualifications (annotated resumes are preferred but not necessary and will not be included in the page limit)."

Question: I am working on a grant application for the August 15 deadline under category 3, monitoring and assessment. From reading the RFP, it sounds like funding for a year is the norm, with the possibility of three years of funding for projects totaling less than \$75 K. My question is: for the purpose of the project timeline, what is the one year period? January 1, 2007 - January 1, 2008?

Answer: EPA can approve a project period of up to 3 years, however, the project must be fully funded in the first year - if the project totals less than \$75,000. Yes, typically the projects run for one-year (365 days), with the start date beginning as soon as practicable. Individual start dates are negotiated during the application phase.

Question: Is it advisable for one PI to submit multiple proposals (e.g. one for section 1b, another for section 2a)?

Answer: Multiple proposals submitted by the same organization is permitted, however, a complete proposal package must be prepared for each project.

Question: If we have literature cited in our statement of work does that section count in our nine page limit or literature cited/references be an appendix?

Answer: We would recommend citing literature/references as an appendix. (Please see Section IV.C. - Contents of Application Submission - for specifics.)

Question: Is it required that I submit my proposal through Grants.gov?

Answer: Please refer to Section IV., Application and Submission Information, B. Form of Application Submission: “Applicants have the option to submit their proposals in one

of two ways: 1) Electronically through the Grants.gov website or 2) hard copy and CD by express delivery service, hand delivery, or courier service to:

US EPA Assessment and Watershed Protection Division
Attention: Tim Icke
EPA West Building
1301 Constitution Ave., NW
Room 7313E
Washington, DC 20004

Note that two hard copies of the complete proposal package and an electronic version on a CD are required to be sent by express mail, courier service, or hand delivered. Proposals submitted by standard U.S. Postal Mail will not be considered. EPA will not accept faxed submissions. CDs may be in Adobe Portable Document Format (.pdf) or Microsoft Word (.doc). Letters of support will need to be scanned so that they can be saved to the CD.

Question: Will my proposal be scored lower if I elect to submit my proposal through the hard copy submission method?

Answer: All proposals will be reviewed and scored using the selection criteria described in Section V., Application Review Information. All proposal packages, regardless of how submitted, must include a signed SF 424 and SF424A, and a complete Statement of Work as described in Section IV, C., Content of Application Submission.

Question: I have a question for you regarding Section 1.c. of the AWPPG announcement. We think a needs assessment is integral to the ultimate work we would like to propose under this section (we want to develop a water science literacy training for decision-makers). Does EPA fund needs assessments as long as they are critical to the more substantive work done later on?

Answer: EPA is looking to fund proposals that are focused on our priorities, as listed in the RFP.

Question: For the project topic area identified at Section I.B.1.a of the RFP (Assessment and TMDL Workshops), is the Agency envisioning the convening of a "workshop" in the sense that an attempt should be made among participants to reach some level of agreement on "best practices" for various issues, and if so, would attendance be limited to pre-identified experts? Or is the Agency envisioning an event styled more as a "conference," where information will be shared among persons with a wide range of expertise and experience?

Answer: The ultimate goal of these workshops is to build up the capacity of practitioners. As such, the sharing of experiences and approaches that have been successful is envisioned as a primary component. While these workshops are not

expected to result in consensus on the best approach for undertaking certain activities, they would be styled more to include recognized contributors in the field and generate discussion, than to be styled as a conference with little opportunity for interaction.

Question: For the project topic area identified at Section I.B.1.a of the RFP (Assessment and TMDL Workshops), the Agency identifies six "[p]ossible workshop topics/sessions." Does the Agency expect that all of these topics will be covered at the workshop, or rather that the conveners will focus instead on a select few of these possible workshop topics/sessions?

Answer: Workshops could focus on one or more topic areas and would not be expected to include all of the examples provided in the RFP.